

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

TRADITIONAL ACUPUNCTURE FOR TODAY—Edward John Ettl, MD, FACP, Acupuncture and Pain Clinic of El Paso. Comographix, Inc., Southwest Microfilm Division, 2601 E. Yandell Drive, El Paso, Texas (79902), 1975. 12 Microfiches, \$20.00.

Traditional Acupuncture for Today is in some ways a comprehensive work on acupuncture. Whether it is truly useful for today's practice is questionable, however. It consists almost exclusively of reproductions of traditional Chinese diagrams that have long been supplanted for Chinese and Japanese acupuncturists by modern, anatomically correct diagrams each of which emphasizes only a restricted number of acupuncture points. The old illustrations, as used in this work, show dozens of points on numerous meridians, of which one or two are emphasized for special consideration on each frame.

It is almost true, as the compiler says, that "this is one of the largest writings in the past 1,000 years on Oriental medicine adapted to daily use." Certainly it is one of the largest collections of illustrations, though they are almost totally devoid of written explanation except for a few summary statements in English and not very extensive legends in Chinese. What a modern Western physician is supposed to glean from this available of nearly identical diagrams is difficult to fathom.

Detailed description of the origin and course of each meridian and the acupuncture points located thereon are so full of detail that it will be difficult, even impossible, for a novice to understand the details or to retain them in his memory. Apart from individual descriptions of each of the meridians, there is also a collection of charts which detail the regions of the body. The compiler evidently is not conversant with the original Chinese material he describes, since the descriptions are technical in the Western sense but far removed from the Oriental meaning. Illustrations are needlessly repetitive even though each of the many repeated figures concentrates on a different meridian and different acupuncture point.

On the whole, the work is virtually without original material and seems to be an indiscriminate compilation of all the writings that have ever been collected on acupuncture. Those who are totally unfamiliar with acupuncture in theory and practice may find an occasional passage worth studying. Others who already are familiar with acupuncture will find this a boring repetition of practically useless information. The reproduced woodcuts are poor and the legends nearly illegible, even using a good microfilm reader. Also the question arises when and where Dr. Ettl received his information, since the anesthesia points shown here for the purpose of cesarean section are entirely different from those currently used in the People's Republic of China. Moreover, it is absolutely misleading, for example, to give points for the treatment of deafness because the treatment of deafness by acupuncture is still in a highly experimental stage (see *Feasibility of acupuncture as a treatment for sensorineural deafness in children. The Laryngoscope* 84:2202-2217, Dec 1974).

Dr. Ettl's credentials for compiling a work on acupuncture are simply that he has attended numerous acupuncture training sessions, meetings and seminars and that he has come away from them feeling that he had learned too little for the time and the expenditure.

Evidently, the expenditure of \$20 for a collection of hundreds of randomly collected illustrations on acu-

puncture would be modest, if it were felt that the work had any appreciable merit whatsoever. Apart from the difficulty of understanding the purpose of the illustrations, the reviewer is disturbed by the lack of identification and reference to the origin of these illustrations. No acknowledgment is made as to from where the material is "borrowed" or if it was taken with the author's or publisher's permission.

In all probability, the book has served to clarify Dr. Ettl's own understanding of acupuncture, as this could be the most valid explanation for the *modus operandi* of the compiler.

ILZA VEITH, PH D, D MED SCI

EDITOR'S NOTE: In October 1975 Dr. Veith was awarded the Doctor of Medical Sciences degree (Igaken Hakase) by the Juntendo University in Tokyo. The degree—the highest medical degree given in Japan—honors Dr. Veith for her "important contributions in the studies of Oriental Medicine" and was awarded following her examination by a faculty committee in defense of her thesis: "Foundations of Oriental Psychiatry."

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IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?—A Parent's Guide to Raising a Mentally Handicapped Child—Susan Strauss. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 245 Park Avenue, New York City (10017), 1975. 152 pages, \$7.95.

This is another mother's account of a retarded child. She relates with clarity her mounting concern over a child who is different and her frustrations in obtaining examinations, counseling, and special schools.

She describes her son's failure to thrive as an infant, his evaluation in a hospital at the age of five months, followed by a gradual awareness of his slow developmental progress. At four years of age, the parents indicated their anxiety to the child's pediatrician, who then referred him to a pediatric neurologist, who reported negative findings and offered no diagnosis. An evaluation by a psychologist resulted in referral to a psychiatrist who noted autistic features in the child's behavior. While the parents were concerned about the term "autistic," the definite diagnosis and plan for treatment elicited a period of optimism mixed with hopelessness and confusion, but they continued to worry, express concern, and grope for signs of minor improvement. Eventually, the child was placed in a residential facility on recommendation of the psychiatrist who felt that to keep him at home was to the child's disadvantage.

The author expresses concern as to why an earlier evaluation was not suggested. She wonders when a pediatrician is justified in suggesting further evaluation or counseling for a suspected developmental problem even though this might alarm the parents, perhaps unnecessarily.

This book is informative as to how one parent met the challenge of a child who is different. It also includes suggestions for locating resources for diagnosis and treatment for a child who is functioning in a subnormal manner intellectually and lists major agencies in the United States and England which are concerned with the retarded, the autistic, and the child with a learning disability.

PETER COHEN, MD